

**Frequently Asked Questions for Applications for
Institutional National Research Service Award (T32)
National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute**

Applicants can refer to the NIH website for many of the common questions asked NIH-wide about the Institutional National Research Service Award (T32) at the following URL:

http://grants.nih.gov/training/faq_training.htm.

Frequently asked pre-award questions related to NHLBI T32 applications:

1. What is the **NHLBI** receipt deadline for a competing T32 grant application?

Note that NHLBI only accepts applications on May 10. The earliest possible award date is April 1.

2. How can I insure that my grant application will be sent to the NHLBI?

One way is to attach a letter to the face page of the application requesting that the grant be assigned to the NHLBI. When the application is received at the NHLBI the NHLBI Program Official will determine if it is relevant to the Institute's mission and whether the Institute should accept assignment of the application. If it is not accepted at the NHLBI it will be sent to a more appropriate Institute.

3. Are competing T32 applications subject to the NIH policies on applications with direct costs exceeding \$500,000 in any one year?

Yes. If the requested costs for your T32 application exceed \$500,000 in direct costs for any year of the award, you must receive approval to accept the application from the NHLBI prior to submission. Policies for requesting approval are available at:

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/funding/policies/500kweb.htm>.

4. To what Study Section do I send my T32 grant application?

All grant applications are sent to one address that is cited in Form PHS 398. The Center for Scientific Review receives all applications and distributes them to the individual Institutes (I) and Centers (C) at NIH. Each I/C has a special Study Section that reviews T32s. You need not specify the name of the study section.

5. Can a T32 grant be awarded for less than 5 years?

Yes. The length of the award is at the discretion of the Review Committee. The Committee may perceive a problem which may occur in the near future with the grantee and may elect to award a shorter period in order to monitor events. Other reasons for shorter periods may be: a new or unusual training program is being initiated and there is a question of its effectiveness; funding sources cited by the Program Director to maintain a viable training program may be in question or appear inadequate; recruitment of trainees over an extended period may be difficult.

6. The NHLBI, along with other NIH Institutes, uses a formula to calculate what would be the allowable costs to be awarded for tuition/fees/self-only health insurance to each grantee; should the grantee use this formula to request a budget?

No. Grantees should request full costs in the application. The NHLBI's Grants Operations Branch will apply the formula at the time of award.

7. How is the stipend level determined for the T32 trainee?

The stipend level for the NRSA trainee is determined by the number of full years of relevant postdoctoral experience after the doctorate at the time of appointment. The stipend levels are regulated by Congressional legislation and are periodically adjusted to meet the rise in the cost of living. It is important that Program Directors and trainees know how to determine the number of years of relevant postdoctoral experience and are aware of the current stipend levels to ensure that the correct stipend is being requested by the institution on behalf of the trainee. Institutions have been known to make errors in determining the correct amount. The current stipend levels can be obtained by going to the NIH website at <http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/index.html> and entering the words "nrса stipends increase".

8. Are there specific formats for the tables in the grant application?

Yes. NHLBI has made available required formats that will assist the applicant to organize the required information in a way that reviewers can readily evaluate. Specific table formats for the T32 grant application are located at: [NHLBI Format and Required Tables for Institutional NRSA](#)

9. Is it possible to get a copy of a successful T32 grant to use as a guide?

Not at this time. The training objectives of individual T32 grants are so very different and cover so many areas of career relevance that to find even a number of "standard" acceptable grants is difficult.

10. What review considerations should I be aware of in preparing a mentorship plan?

You are advised to: describe time commitments specifically and ensure they are appropriate to defined goals and needs; include descriptions in the training plan of trainees' specific roles on various projects and how these contribute to career development; ensure that the career development plan, mentoring plan, expertise/expectations of mentors and letters of support are all consistent and coherently directed toward meeting the trainee's career goals; consider inclusion of secondary mentors or mentoring or advisory committees if they are clearly integrated into the overall career development plan; and include description of previous trainees and their accomplishments, and mentors' roles in their career development, without limiting this description to formal relationships such as past T32 or K programs. Excellent mentorship guides are available from the National Academy of Sciences at: <http://www.nap.edu/readingroom/books/mentor/> and the NIH Intramural Program at: <http://www1.od.nih.gov/oir/sourcebook/ethic-conduct/mentor-guide.htm>.

11. Are there other review issues of which I should be aware?

Other issues frequently commented upon during review include:

- Whether the Program Director will devote sufficient time to the training grant, based on either no percent effort for the grant specified, or a low percent effort.
- If a very large a number of faculty is involved, whether the program would have difficulty in providing a sense of unity, cohesiveness, and true collaboration across departments (as applicable).
- Whether proposed predoctoral programs are given as much attention in preparation and description as proposed postdoctoral programs in the same application.
- Whether the majority of trainees are trained with just one or two faculty.
- Whether the proposed faculty includes experienced, successful trainers with evidence of other research grant support.
- Whether the proposed program overlaps with other training grants at the same institution.
- For competing renewal applications, whether the number of training positions actually awarded was different from the number recommended by reviewers and why.
- Whether the program demonstrates integration among tracks, faculty, multiple campuses or sites, pre-doctoral and post-doctoral programs, basic and clinical research, etc.
- Whether the program includes internal and/or external advisory committees with descriptions of membership, role, frequency of meetings, etc.
- Whether the process for selecting trainees is described and trainees and mentors will be matched.
- Whether the program will provide trainees with up-to-date skills.

In addition, if you are proposing an increase in the number of training positions, the need for the extra positions must be justified and supported by a good record of filling previous slots and evidence of an adequate trainee pool. Other criticisms often applied to training grant applications include: lack of focus or theme, lack of integrated leadership, lack of modern cutting-edge science, inadequate descriptions of didactic coursework, and lack of other research support for faculty.

12. What is the NHLBI policy for T32s on training in the responsible conduct of research?

All T32 grants **must** have a responsible conduct of research component that is assessed by the Review Committee for adequacy. It is **mandatory** that every trainee complete this assignment. An award will not be made until an adequate plan for training in responsible conduct of research has been submitted to NHLBI.

13. Can a continuing competitive application with an inadequate minority recruitment plan be funded?

Yes, but only for one year. In order to receive full term funding (five years) the Principal Investigator must resubmit a revised minority recruitment plan for rereview by the NHLBI. A new grant with an inadequate minority recruitment plan cannot be funded until an adequate minority recruitment plan is resubmitted and approved by the Review Committee. If the Minority Recruitment Plan receives an inadequate rating, the Principal Investigator of a T32 grant is urged to contact NHLBI program staff for guidance.

Frequently asked post-award questions:

14. Is a new Appointment Form required each year for a trainee to be supported by a T32 grant?

Yes. Each appointment begins a new 12-month period.

15. When is a Termination Form needed?

When a trainee completes his/her period of planned training as cited on the Appointment Form. The Termination and Appointment Forms **must match each other**. If a trainee leaves prior to the original planned appointment period, then an amended appointment form must be submitted so the termination date matches the end of the abbreviated appointment period. This procedure also must be followed if the trainee is to take a leave of absence and is to be reappointed later.

16. Can an individual be appointed to a post-doc training position if he/she has completed all requirements of the doctorate but has not formally received the diploma?

Yes. Some institutions hold formal ceremonies for the awarding of diploma after all relevant requirements for the degree have been met. When there is no formal ceremony, then the NHLBI needs formal documentation from the institution that the trainee has completed all requirements for the degree and the appointment date on the T32 must be on or after the date cited when the trainee completed all doctoral requirements.

17. Is a payback agreement required for all new appointed postdoctoral trainees?

Yes, if the appointee has never been supported on an NRSA award. If an appointee has been supported for 12 months or longer at some previous time, there is no need for another payback agreement. The individual only has to do this **once**. Simple guidelines for completing the payback requirement are available at: [Payback](#).

18. Is a payback agreement required for all NRSA postdoctoral trainees?

Yes, but only once for all NRSA supported candidates at the outset of their initial 12-months of postdoctoral support. If the trainee received prior NRSA support that totals 12 months, on either an institutional training grant (T32) or an individual fellowship (F32), a new payback agreement would not be required. Payback service begins on the 13th month of support and will end at the conclusion of the 24th month. If the trainee is supported for a third year it is without any obligations. Refer to the simple guidelines at: [Payback](#) for further information.

19. Is it possible to add a member of an underrepresented minority to the T32 when all of the slots are already filled?

Yes. The Program Director should request in a letter to the NHLBI Program Official the additional slot and describe the training the candidate would receive. This award is made for one year but is continued in future years as a "supplement appointment" as long as the candidate remains on the grant. Consult the Program Official responsible for the grant directly if you have a situation like this for NHLBI's specific instructions.

20. Can there be a change of distribution of pre- and post-doctoral trainees after award of the T32?

Yes. The change of trainees from one category to the other can occur with the prior approval of the NHLBI Program Official. The situation must be explained by the Program Director in a letter to the Program Official. However, there may be budget considerations that may be a factor in approving the change.

21. Can the cost of recruiting trainees be charged to the T32?

No. PHS Grants Policy states that "Project funds may not be used for a prospective trainee's travel costs to or from the grantee institution for the purpose of recruitment."

22. Can a "brand-new" trainee be appointed during a no-cost extension of an existing grant?

NHLBI policy prohibits such an appointment because of the limited training experiences a new trainee would receive as well as the difficulties it poses to the trainee in fulfilling payback requirements. However, reappointments of current trainees to the full extent of the remaining budget is possible. It is NHLBI policy that pre-docs have a higher priority than post-docs if the budget is limited during the no-cost extension phase because post-docs have more flexibility to move elsewhere.

23. Can a trainee be supported on a NIH research grant at the same time he/she is receiving a stipend from a T32 grant?

No. Public Health Service funds may not be used to supplement an NRSA stipend. Trainees are required to devote full-time effort to the training program. Trainees may receive separate salary from an NIH grant when employed for services, such as laboratory technical assistance, on a limited part-time basis. Part-time is considered by NHLBI as up to 20 hours per week. Compensation may not be paid from a research grant that supports the same research that is part of the trainee's planned training experience. Under no circumstances may the employment interfere with, detract from, or prolong the trainee's approved NRSA training program.

24. In the NHLBI, does the T32 grant operate under Expanded Authorities?

No. As with most Institutes and training grants at the NIH, NHLBI has not included them under the Expanded Authorities status. Automatic carryover of unexpended funds is thus not permitted. If there is a need for carryover, prior approval is required. Under most circumstances, each T32 is fully funded each year and there is little justification for carryovers.

25. How can I ask for post award changes to my existing T32 award?

You must contact the NHLBI Grants Administration official to determine the appropriate procedures to use in making a request for post award changes in your grant. This also applies to any of your needs that require a prior approval from the NHLBI. In general, you will have to make a request that is signed by you and a business official of your institution. After receiving the request, the Grants Administration official will consult with the NHLBI Program Official as necessary to determine whether the request can be approved.